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GENOCIDE IN THE  
CONTEMPORARY WORLD  
by  
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I. COLLECTIVE DENIAL

The twentieth century has been an age of genocide and mass murder, but most scholars have disregarded this unpleasant reality. Underlying their neglect is the fact that the persistence of genocide throughout history contradicts the Western idea of progress. For centuries our society has interpreted the story of humanity as one of constant improvement and as an ascent towards a higher level of civilization. In art, literature, and intellectual discourse, Western civilization is portrayed as liberated from the barbarisms of earlier societies. Viewing the world from this perspective, many scholars have acted as if they subscribed to the maxim that "what must not exist, does not exist."

A typical expression of this blind faith in progress was published on the verge of World War I by Jules Baillet, a French Egyptologist. With an optimism characteristic of his age, Baillet wrote of Pharaoh Merneptah's reign: "Our civilization would classify as savagery and as pointless cruelty the burning of towns and the systematic destruction of fruit trees candidly recorded by the Egyptian monuments; it does not any longer doom a vanquished people to total extermination, not even through slavery substituted for killing; it considers women and children as innocents . . . safeguarding their honour, their liberty, and

their lives. . . . But it has taken centuries of barbarity to realize this relative progress."<sup>1</sup> In the inter-war years, some scholars found yet another reason for overlooking the mass killings of the past in their fear that such accounts would fan the embers of ethnic hatred and encourage even more killings.

Not even the shocks of the Turkish genocide of the Armenians, the mass killings during Stalin's regime, or the slaughter of the Holocaust reoriented mainstream research towards the persistence of genocide. Collective denial of the past is still the rule among intellectuals. As Saul Friedlander has pointed out, the Holocaust is present in modern scholarship, but it has no impact.<sup>2</sup> Neither the genocides of the twentieth century nor those which preceded it have fundamentally altered the major debates among Western intellectuals. The brutality of World War I was instrumental in the rise of the ironic mode in literature, as Paul Fussell demonstrates in The Great War and Modern Memory, but in our own time the significance of genocide for Western society's understanding of human nature has drawn the attention of very few scholars.<sup>3</sup>

It is particularly striking that modern existential philosophers have avoided a confrontation with the Holocaust. "With the exception of [Hannah] Arendt," writes Alan Rosenberg, "it seems that philosophers have failed to examine the Holocaust and the genocides associated with World War II with an eye to seeing what implications these events might have for the contents of their discipline and for our understanding of human nature as

such." Among those leading philosophers who have failed to study the Holocaust and its implications systematically are Adorno, Buber, Camus, Heidegger, Jaspers, and Sartre.<sup>4</sup> Philosopher Alan Montefiore seems to think that their uncritical approach is based on their fear of facing the genocidal impulses within themselves and the rest of the human race.<sup>5</sup>

The avoidance of the significance of the Holocaust and other genocides by intellectuals contributes to a dangerously idealized image of society. Our own work on genocide is based on the premise that genocide is an important part of human history. We agree with historian Amos Funkenstein's view that genocide is a "possibility of human existence" that demonstrates "those extremes which only man and his society are capable of doing and suffering" and that it is "as human as the best instances of creativity and compassion."<sup>6</sup>

Raphael Lemkin, the Polish Jewish lawyer who originated the idea of a United Nations convention on genocide, was probably the first scholar to grasp the persistence of genocide in history. He studied earlier cases of genocide, as he explained in his unpublished autobiography, because the "Nazi experience was not sufficient basis for a definition of Genocide for international purposes." One could not "describe a crime by one criminal experience alone," he noted; "one must . . . draw on all available experiences of the past." The historical dimension of genocide was particularly important for Lemkin because he sought

a formulation that "must be valid for all times, situations and cultures."<sup>7</sup>

As Lemkin had anticipated, the history of genocide did not end with the Holocaust. Moreover, genocide has continued to occur throughout most of the world. In spite of this fact, there are those who object to being reminded of the darker pages of our history. They aim their attacks against books, memorials, and media presentations that remind us of mankind's cruelty towards its own kind. What seems to be overlooked by these participants in collective denial is that they are doing far more than engaging in an intellectual debate. They do not realize that collective denial of the past itself plays a crucial role in the recurrence of genocide. In our age of voluminous and instant communication, something that is not being communicated is perceived as something that is not happening. As Hitler's famous remark--"Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians"--indicates, collective denial encourages potential perpetrators.<sup>8</sup> We might paraphrase Hitler and ask today "who remembers Bangladesh, Burundi or all the other cases of genocide since the Second World War." For those of us who are concerned with trying to prevent future genocides, collective denial is one of the conditions that encourages potential perpetrators and must therefore be one area of our active intervention.

In our book on The History and Sociology of Genocide, we have proposed a four-fold typology in order to classify genocides that have occurred throughout history; we also suggest that the

twentieth century is the century of ideological genocides.

However, the genocidal events since the end of World War II have exhibited such extraordinary diversity that it now seems important to distinguish several patterns.

## II. SOME PATTERNS IN GENOCIDE SINCE WORLD WAR II

The motives of the perpetrators of genocide after the Second World War fall into five broad categories:

- To crush a separatist movement, as in Bangladesh in 1971, Ethiopia since 1974, and the Sudan in the years 1955 to 1971 and 1980 to the present;
- To dominate a domestic ethnic group, as in Burundi in 1972 and in Equatorial Guinea from 1968 to 1979;
- To consolidate control of another state's territory, as in East Timor from 1975 to today;
- To fulfill an ideology, as in Indonesia in 1965, Cambodia from 1975 to 1978, and Ethiopia from 1974 to today; and
- To develop domestic natural resources, as in the Amazon region of Brazil from the 1930's to the present.<sup>10</sup>

Several of the cases included in this typology involve more than one motive.<sup>10</sup> We have classified the cases according to our present judgement of which motive predominates. Ethiopia appears in two categories because its government is carrying out two genocides and the motives are different in each case.<sup>11</sup> In the time available for our presentation at this conference, we cannot hope to discuss all the modern cases. For the purpose of bringing forward some of our analytical conclusions, we have chosen to

focus our discussion on three of the five motives for contemporary genocides: a) genocide to crush separatist movements; b) genocide to dominate a domestic ethnic group; and c) genocide to fulfill an ideology.

#### A. GENOCIDE TO CRUSH A SEPARATIST MOVEMENT

Regional concentrations of ethnic groups in poor and very crowded countries sometimes explode into separatist violence, especially when an authoritarian central government attempts to impose its policies on an ethnic group that already perceives itself to be the victim of internal colonialism. For these peoples, armed rebellion is often the only means of escaping the consequences of oppression and second-class citizenship.

The level of terror in a typical anti-separatist civil war is very high. The soldiers of the government army treat civilians in the rebellious territory as traitors. They burn crops, destroy villages, and carry out massacres. The provision of military hardware by foreign powers to both sides, a characteristic of all the cases in this category, brings with it the introduction of enormous fire power and raises the casualty level. Internationalization of these domestic conflicts also prolongs them. While the central government usually manages to stay in power, it cannot smother the ethnic group's fight for autonomy.<sup>12</sup> The perpetrator who employs genocidal killing to crush a break-away movement has already concluded that the population of the dissident region is overwhelmingly hostile to the central government. In these cases, genocide is accomplished through

annihilatory central government attacks on noncombatants who are defined by the perpetrators as members of selected social and political groups.

Two of the three genocides intended to crush a separatist movement--those in Ethiopia and the Sudan--have gone on for many years and are still underway despite recent efforts to end the fighting through negotiations. The civil wars in Ethiopia and the Sudan have taken the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians, including many thousands who died as a result of genocide. The genocide in Bangladesh began with an armed attack by Pakistan in March 1971 and lasted for nine months. Pakistan's terror tactics cost the lives of 1.2 to 3 million persons and were accompanied by large-scale rape and pillage. During the genocide, Bengalis belonging to certain elite groups--businessmen, civil servants, professionals, and teachers--as well as Awami League militants and Hindus were singled out as victims. It was only halted when the Indian Army attacked and defeated the armed forces of Pakistan.

Most genocides produce large numbers of refugees, but none have produced as many as the cases in this group. The genocide in Bangladesh sparked the largest single mass exodus of its kind in modern history. Some ten million Bengalis, nearly one-seventh of the population, fled to India to escape it.<sup>13</sup> In Ethiopia and the Sudan, government resettlement schemes and the military's attacks on civilians have forced hundreds of thousands of people into "resettlement" villages and refugee camps in hostile regions

of their own countries, while additional hundreds of thousands of their fellow citizens have fled to neighboring countries.<sup>14</sup> The fighting in the Sudan has displaced 3.5 million people, according to the latest estimates.<sup>15</sup> In Ethiopia, the government's resettlement program alone has forced some 800,000 people from their home areas.<sup>16</sup>

In the Ethiopia/Sudan relationship, both governments are perpetrators of genocide and both countries serve as sanctuaries for the other country's victims.<sup>17</sup> In the years from 1979 to 1984, in addition to the 50,000 Ethiopian Oromo Muslim refugees who trekked to Somalia in search of food and safety from attack, another 225,000 Ethiopian refugees crossed into the Sudan, and some 300,000 starving Sudanese refugees entered Ethiopia. Parallelizing the symmetry of these refugee migrations, the government of the Sudan assists the separatist forces in the Ethiopian provinces of Eritrea and Tigré, while the Ethiopian government sends supplies to the Sudan People's Liberation Army fighting for the independence of the southern Sudan.<sup>18</sup>

The enormous number of refugees produced by anti-separatist genocides sends a clear signal to foreign governments and the media that something extraordinary is underway, but the reaction to these warnings is often misdirected. Until 1984-1985, the Western media attributed the famines in Ethiopia solely to droughts. It took a number of human rights researchers, aid workers, and journalists to rip aside the curtain of self-censorship concealing the Ethiopian government's important role

in causing massive famine. Their reports also showed how food aid was used by the Ethiopian government to advance its genocidal campaign. The conflict in the Sudan has attracted much less media interest than the struggles in Ethiopia. However, the news that is reported usually emphasizes the famine, while neglecting its roots in the attempts of Arab Muslim northerners to crush the black Christian separatists of the southern Sudan.

Intervention by foreign governments to stop a genocide requires an unusual combination of factors. If ever there were grounds for such intervention after 1945 they existed during Pakistan's assault on East Pakistan. It was India that stopped the killing in East Pakistan, emboldened by the problems of caring for ten million Bengali refugees and the chance to weaken Pakistan by playing midwife at the birth of Bangladesh. Thus, when intervention came in December 1971, it was by a neighboring state with a strong strategic interest motivating its political leaders.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi calculated that the benefits of her intervention would outweigh the costs. The United States exacted those costs--censure by the United Nations and heavy cutbacks in U.S. aid. Nixon and Kissinger punished India by blocking the release of more refugee relief to New Delhi and ordering that no Agency for International Development funds should be provided for India in the next federal budget.<sup>19</sup> Kissinger explains in his memoirs that he interpreted the Indian intervention as evidence that Mrs. Gandhi, encouraged by the

Soviet Union, intended to "settle accounts with Pakistan once and for all and assert India's preeminence on the subcontinent."<sup>20</sup> While conceding that Pakistan had acted "unwisely, brutally, and even immorally," he insisted on the primacy of his "geopolitical perspective" over the "regional perspective" of the State Department, which favored sanctions against Pakistan.<sup>21</sup> If "shortsighted and repressive domestic policies [like Pakistan's] are used to justify foreign military intervention," Kissinger observes, "the international order will soon be deprived of all restraints."<sup>22</sup> More important to him than opposing the genocide in Bangladesh were the urgent requirements of international equilibrium. These hinged on protecting Washington's new relationship with China and reassuring "allies like Iran and Turkey . . . ,<sup>23</sup> countries that "sympathized with Pakistan . . . and looked to our reaction [to India's invasion] as a token of American steadiness in potential crises affecting them."<sup>24</sup>

Those of us concerned with preventing genocide should note that Kissinger never mentions the selective genocide perpetrated by Pakistan before the Indian army entered East Pakistan. In Kissinger's intellectual perspective, the repeated calls by State Department officials for U.S. measures to rein in Pakistan were unwelcome. They undoubtedly fell into his category of proposals arising from dangerously "fluctuating emotions" generated by "an idealistic tradition that sees foreign policy as a contest between good and evil."<sup>25</sup> Refusal to acknowledge the existence of genocide prior to India's attack and its relevance to a

troubled world order characterizes Kissinger's account of the India-Pakistan crisis of 1971.<sup>25</sup>

#### B. GENOCIDE TO DOMINATE A DOMESTIC ETHNIC GROUP: BURUNDI AND EQUATORIAL GUINEA

President-for-Life Don Francisco Macias Nguema practiced genocide in Equatorial Guinea from March 1969 until his overthrow by his nephew, Col. Teodoro Obiang Nguema, in August 1979. Macias belonged to the Fang tribe, whose members were less well educated than the members of the rival Bubi tribe. The principal victims of his genocide were the members of the Bubi tribe and the Fernandinos, who are Creoles of Spanish descent, but Macias' regime also killed thousands of political opponents, West African plantation laborers, and peasants forced into slave labor under appalling conditions. During his years in office, Macias came to be known among politicians in Spain, which ruled Equatorial Guinea until 1968, as "our own Idi Amin."<sup>26</sup> In 1978, two years after Macias declared Ambassador Herbert J. Spiro and Consul William C. Mithoefer Jr. persona non grata, Ambassador Spiro told a reporter that the President-for-Life "makes Uganda's Idi Amin look like a statesman."<sup>27</sup> Among its better educated citizens, Equatorial Guinea was seen as a "cottage-industry Dachau".<sup>28</sup> What gave these observers this impression was conveyed by a Cameroonian diplomat who told a reporter in 1978 that Macias "seemed to be intent on wiping out all local political leaders, high government officials, professional men, businessmen and intellectuals who do not belong to his immediate tribal group."<sup>29</sup>

The mass killing in Burundi in 1972 that took the lives of an estimated 100,000 Africans of the Hutu tribe within a period of six weeks was an ethnic genocide designed to annihilate every Hutu with education, a government job, or money. The perpetrators of these killings intended to destroy all the educated and semi-educated Hutu in Burundi. Moreover, from their point of view, the selective genocide was a success. Almost all of Burundi's roughly 4,100,000 Hutu are now excluded from the army, the public service, the university, and secondary schools.<sup>30</sup> Today Burundi is run by an elite drawn from its estimated 675,000 Tutsi. And thanks to the genocide, the rulers can also say with straight faces that there are no Hutu qualified to fill jobs that require more than the minimum skills.

An important part of the background to genocide in Burundi was the earlier uprising by Hutu in Rwanda that cost the lives of an estimated 100,000 Tutsi. While not excusing the actions of the Tutsi in Burundi, the revolution in Rwanda explains the Tutsi elite's fears that its power might be seized by the Hutu in their own country. As René Lemarchand has shown, the Hutu revolution in Rwanda played a major role in undermining the web of clan, lineage, regional and national political ties that cut across ethnic lines and distinguished Burundi from Rwanda. Fear of a Hutu rising in Burundi accentuated ethnic conflict for the first time in its modern history.<sup>31</sup>

During Macias' eleven years in power, roughly one-third of the population, or 100,000 persons, went into exile for political

or economic reasons in Gabon, Cameroon, Algeria, and Spain. This figure does not include the 25,000 Nigerian laborers who fled for their lives in 1975-1976 or the 20,000 remaining Nigerian laborers whom Macias subsequently expelled.<sup>32</sup> Nor does it include the 7,000 Spaniards who fled the country in 1969 after Macias accused "big Spanish business interests of being behind an abortive coup d'état."<sup>33</sup>

The genocide in Burundi in 1972 sparked the flight of an estimated 165,000 Hutu refugees to Rwanda, Zaire, and Tanzania. Most of the refugees returned to their homeland after President Bagaza came to office only to encounter another, more spontaneous round of mass killings in August 1988 which took the lives of an estimated 20,000 Hutu and sent another 43,000 refugees scurrying into Rwanda for protection.<sup>34</sup>

Equatorial Guinea under Macias was so isolated from contact with the outside world that one African diplomat dubbed it an "African Cambodia".<sup>35</sup> The Spanish government barred any news on Equatorial Guinea from appearing in the Spanish press from 1971 until General Franco's death in 1975. The reason for this was said to be that Franco feared for the lives of Spanish businessmen still living in Equatorial Guinea, but it may also be true that influential Spanish businessmen had a vested interest in Macias' political survival.<sup>36</sup> In any case, all newsmen were barred from Equatorial Guinea for many years. From 1974 to 1979, no newspapers were published in Equatorial Guinea.<sup>37</sup>

Although it has a population approximately ten times larger than Equatorial Guinea's, the Western media have paid very little attention to Burundi except in times of mass killings or coups d'états. The New York Times, which does a better job of covering African news than most American newspapers, is a good barometer for this phenomenon. During the eleven years that Macias ruled, it devoted only 16 articles to Equatorial Guinea, but it published 14 articles on events there in the year that he was overthrown and tried on charges of genocide. Similarly, in the five years just before the genocide in Burundi, the Times published only 10 articles on that country, but in 1972, the year of the genocide, it discussed Burundi in 26 articles.

Mislabeling of events and shallow reporting characterize the articles on Burundi and Equatorial Guinea that did appear in the New York Times. During the many weeks that the selective genocide in Burundi was underway, the Times' stories made it sound as if the Tutsi were the real victims and simple "tribal warfare" was the problem. When Macias was overthrown in Equatorial Guinea, the Times ran a long Associated Press dispatch proclaiming that he had run the most brutal government in Africa. The editors of the Times never explained why they had virtually ignored for eleven years a regime that had earned such a sobering distinction and why their only editorial on the subject was a stinging attack on novelist Frederick Forsyth for his involvement in an abortive attempt to overthrow Macias in 1972.<sup>28</sup>

Some foreign governments had a good idea of what was happening in Equatorial Guinea under Macias. At the time of his overthrow, China, France and Gabon had embassies there, and Cuba, China, the Soviet Union, and Spain maintained several hundred aid advisers, technicians, and teachers in the country. Macias, a self-proclaimed Marxist, sustained cordial relations with the governments of the Soviet Union and the Peoples Republic of China, even visiting Peking to sign a small aid agreement in 1977.<sup>39</sup>

As in Equatorial Guinea, the international community failed completely to halt the genocide in Burundi. The Tutsi elite in Bujumbura, Burundi's capital, found its strongest allies in Zaire and France. For these governments, selective genocide was no reason to impose penalties on Burundi. When the government of Belgium threatened Burundi with sanctions unless the killing stopped, France stepped in with an offer to supply whatever aid Belgium decided to withhold.<sup>40</sup> Among the Communist countries, North Korea and China backed the government of Burundi during the genocide, while the Soviet Union joined the Western powers in a mild and ineffectual protest note.<sup>41</sup> The Organization of African Unity actually endorsed Burundi's actions, resolving at its meeting in June 1972 that President Micombero had advanced the cause of peace, national unity, and territorial integrity.<sup>42</sup> As for the United Nations, Secretary General Kurt Waldheim largely devoted himself to providing humanitarian assistance after the genocide was over. There was no public outcry at United Nations

headquarters in New York over the fact that troops in Burundi had commandeered UNICEF Landrovers and trucks to take the Hutu to their deaths.<sup>43</sup> As a club of sovereign governments, the attitude of the United Nations accurately represented the studied indifference of most of its members.

C. GENOCIDE TO FULFILL AN IDEOLOGY: INDONESIA, CAMBODIA, AND ETHIOPIA

Ideological motivations have played a major role in all the great genocides of the twentieth century. Underlying the genocides in Cambodia and in central and southern Ethiopia was the Marxist-Leninist search for a perfect society. The ideological motive that sparked the genocide in Indonesia in October 1965 was hostility to Marxism-Leninism.<sup>44</sup> Short and sharp compared to the genocides of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia from 1975 to 1978 and of the government of Ethiopia from 1974 to the present, the Indonesian genocide took the lives of some 500,000 persons. For Cambodia, the best estimates place the number of deaths due to genocide at between one and two million out of a population of roughly seven million. They were victims of Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge party, a movement that carried out a vast experiment in social engineering aimed at erasing the past in order to build a perfect future.<sup>45</sup> Some of the critics of American policy in Vietnam now maintain that Khmer Rouge brutality was a byproduct of the wartime American bombing, but--as D.S. Greenway notes--they do not explain why the government of Laos, subjected to even heavier bombing, did not follow the Khmer

Rouge example.<sup>46</sup> In Ethiopia in 1984-1985, the government's resettlement, villagization, and collectivization of agriculture schemes, and the famine to which they contributed along with the drought, led to the deaths of some 500,000 people.<sup>47</sup>

The Indonesian genocide produced very few refugees. The reason for this is not very clear to us. Perhaps it was because the victims had very little warning of the Indonesian military's plans or because no neighboring country would give the victims sanctuary. An estimated 600,000 alleged communists were arrested and placed in concentration camps by the government in the aftermath of the genocide. In the years that the Khmer Rouge governed Cambodia at least 30-40,000 refugees reached Thailand and in the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge's defeat by the army of Vietnam the number of Cambodian refugees in Thailand swelled to some 313,000. This second wave included guerrillas supporting King Sihanouk and Khmer Rouge cadres, but it was composed mainly of refugees trying to escape from a devastated society.<sup>48</sup>

The stories told by the first refugees who fled from Cambodia were not believed by many critics of the Vietnam war who saw in the claims of the refugees a CIA effort to discredit the victory of the Cambodian and Vietnamese communists.<sup>49</sup> Contributing to the initial skepticism about a genocide was tight control clamped on all sources of information by the Khmer Rouge immediately after they came to power. William Shawcross' point that refugees fleeing dictatorships have always been good witnesses about the states they left behind was still not

appreciated by journalists.<sup>50</sup> Without any means to document their testimony, the refugees had to wait for the revelations of the Vietnamese who ended Pol Pot's reign of terror in January 1979 to secure vindication. In the case of Ethiopia, the media concentrated on the problem of drought for many months after Cultural Survival and Médecins sans Frontières, in 1985, called to the world's notice the Ethiopian government's role in sabotaging food production. The media also paid very little attention to the selective genocide of classes and political groups in south and central Ethiopia.<sup>51</sup> The genocides in Ethiopia, backed by the flow of Soviet military aid, have not stopped.

Faced with a choice between the Vietnamese-backed government in Phnom Penh and the Khmer Rouge, the people of Cambodia are once more caught between the proverbial tiger and the crocodile. In 1979, with United States support, the United Nations General Assembly voted to continue the seating of Khmer Rouge officials as the official representatives of their country despite their record of genocide in Cambodia. The great powers are now trying to decide whether the Khmer Rouge should be admitted to a coalition government in Cambodia. American foreign policy is still dedicated to limiting Vietnamese and Soviet power in the region. Preventing the Khmer Rouge from regaining the power of life and death over the Cambodians has been deemed a domestic and entirely secondary matter by the Bush administration. These developments remind us of René Lemarchand's pertinent observation

that "what goes by the name of an international conscience is the expression of convergent national interests, not of a global commitment to moral values." It is a point that we would do well to remember.<sup>32</sup>

### III. REFUGEES AS A SOURCE OF DATA

aid organizations, as well as academic specialists. Unfortunately, their evidence is also suspect because they are likely to omit or distort information that otherwise would get them evicted from the perpetrator country, or would lead to denials of entry visas in the future. Finally, there are those emigres and refugees who managed to escape in time. Their testi-

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### III. Refugees as a source of data.

While actual cases of genocide are occurring we usually know little about them and it is always very difficult to obtain accurate information at such crisis moments. This particular quest for information is not in the first place inspired by scholarly curiosity; rather, it is motivated by the desire to help the victims of persecution, and by the possibility - at least in theory - to intervene in the evil designs of the perpetrators. Both possibilities require a base of accurate information upon which to develop appropriate policies and actions. But such accurate and timely information is remarkably difficult to obtain rapidly by conventional means.

In cases of planned or incipient genocides the usual channels of information are almost always blocked or distorted. The perpetrator country always denies both the intention and the action to exterminate a group. Visas to enter such countries are often denied; access to the relevant areas is always blocked; or, only brief, stage-managed visits are arranged to convince outside observers that nothing out of the ordinary is taking place. When it is not possible to hide unusually dramatic suffering, it is blamed on natural disasters, as was the case in the Ethiopian famine, or on threatened insurrection, as was the case in Burundi. Information from the perpetrator governments, when readily available, is full of denials and/or distorted facts. Other obvious sources of information are foreign diplomats, journalists, Red Cross workers, and other representatives of humanitarian



shocked into action by the news of massive starvation, nobody was willing to enquire into the causes of the famine. Humanitarian associations poured in quite amazing quantities of money and materials without having a sound basis of information. They accepted whatever the government said and restricted their activities to those places to which the government gave them access. At the same time they refused to contribute any money to research designed to elicit accurate information because they were afraid of how the Ethiopian government might react. (Clay and Holcomb, 1986, see especially Chapters I, X and XI) Although their motives were admirable, their actions were to a very great extent misguided in that they perpetuated the situations that produced starvation. Even their food distribution program was of limited assistance because it was confined to certain areas, specified by the government.

An even more scathing critique of humanitarian aid programs is contained in chapter 19 of Shawcross' book:

Humanitarian agencies do not often publish discussions of their work. They release lists of, and sometimes accounts of, the assistance they have given, but rarely offer real analysis. Their reports seldom state what the initial objectives of their programs were and how nearly these have been met. As a result, mistakes are repeated again and again from one disaster to another. (p. 386)

He follows this by an analysis of the reasons for this state of affairs in terms of structural, ideological, and human factors (pp. 386-389).

The significant contribution of Clay and Holcomb consists in showing that a great deal of information can be collected in quite a short time and at a very modest cost. They were never granted a visa for Ethiopia and

therefore had to limit their interviewing to those refugees who had reached the Southern Sudan. They were fully aware of the problems of interviewing refugees and of using the information thus obtained. Being denied access to Ethiopia forced them to be very careful with their research design and to pay particular attention to validity and reliability. The results demonstrate that refugees are very good sources of information, provided it is collected and analyzed by competent researchers.

Their results, as well as subsequent information, confirm that the famine was a man-made one, that starvation was deliberately used by the government against groups that opposed it, and that the Western assistance programs have done very little to change that scenario. Unfortunately it takes more than accurate information to stop or prevent a genocide; but without information any action is likely to be misguided and ineffectual.

What Clay and Holcomb have demonstrated conclusively is that it is possible to obtain very reliable information from refugees, in spite of the traumatic effects of their recent experiences. Whether governments and NGO's are prepared to accept such information and act on it is quite another matter. But in future they will not be able to discount the information obtained from refugees quite so cavalierly.

More recently, Bill Frelick has taken up this same issue in the *World Refugee Survey* because genocides are becoming more frequent and are responsible for significant refugee flows. He addresses several significant issues - issues that have to be addressed if there is going to be any hope of intervening. Even when the news leak out, the world is very reluctant to lend it any credence; thus, there is a need to break through these barriers to belief. In order to do so it would be important to produce evidence of

intent, which also happens to be an essential part of the definition of genocide in the UN Convention on Genocide; such evidence of intent would also be very useful in lowering the barriers to belief. But the perpetrators only rarely declare their intent as openly as did Hitler in *Mein Kampf* or Hujjatu'l-Islam Qazai, the president of the revolutionary court in Shiraz (as quoted by Frelick, p.15), did when justifying proposals to destroy Iran's Baha'i community. Therefore, other kinds of evidence need to be looked for. Here both the numbers of refugees and their testimonies play a crucial role. Frelick suggests a variety of methods for obtaining this evidence and for establishing its credibility. Though most of these methods are the stock-in-trade of anthropologists and sociologists who engage in field work research, they are frequently ignored by journalists, diplomats, and the representatives of the various aid organizations. These methods include such elementary aspects as establishing the credibility of the interviewer, finding a private setting in order to exclude peer-group pressures, establishing trust, using reliable translators, verifying the accuracy of the translation, and matching the sex of the interviewer with that of the interviewee. While such methods may appear elementary to the social scientist, they may be very difficult to implement in the field. However, they are absolutely crucial if the evidence collected is going to reduce the disbelief of the world and if it is also used to induce bystanders to intervene on behalf of the victims.

Unfortunately, the availability of reliable and credible evidence is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for action. It has, in the past, proven very difficult to secure acceptance of really bad news, no matter how good the information. There are to this day people who accept the Turkish version of what happened in 1915 to the Armenians. The news of

the Nazi's implementation of the 'final solution' was well-documented even before the end of World War II; but it acquired credibility primarily because the post-war West German government did not deny it. The massacres perpetrated in Cambodia (Kampuchea) by the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot were widely discounted as anti-communist propaganda until the Vietnamese occupiers allowed foreign observers access to documents and murder sites. Even more recently, Ethiopia presents an instructive case of the enormous gap between fact and its acceptance. As Shepherd (1975) documents, the use of famine as a tool of government policy was already well-established under Haile Selassie. Although he was overthrown in 1974, the Dergue under Mengistu continued this practice. Nevertheless, much of the world still accepts the official version of a famine caused by natural disasters. All of which simply proves that it is not enough to have accurate information available unless we can also convince people that the bystander role has become an unacceptable one in the age of human rights. How this is to be achieved remains a topic for further exploration.

## ENDNOTES

1. Jules Baillet, Le régime pharaonique dans ses rapports avec l'évolution de la morale en Egypte (Blois: Grande Impr. de Blois, 1912-13), Vol. I, pp.158-159. We would like to thank Professor Norman Cohn for drawing this paragraph to our attention.
2. Saul Friedlander "On Representations of the Shoah," a lecture presented at the Oxford Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide, July 1987.
3. Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).
4. Alan Rosenberg, "Philosophy and the Holocaust: Suggestions for a Systematic Approach to the Genocidal Universe," European Judaism, 14, 2 (Spring 1981): 31-32.
5. Friedlander, "On Representations of the Shoah."
6. Amos Funkenstein, "Theological Interpretations of the Holocaust," in Unanswered Questions: Nazi Germany and the Genocide of the Jews, ed. François Furet (New York: Schocken Books, 1989; orig. French edition 1985), p.303.
7. R. Lemkin, "Autobiography," Typescript, chapter 9, p. 27, Lemkin Papers, New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.
8. K.B. Bardakjian, Hitler and the Armenian Genocide, Special Report No. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: The Zoryan Institute, 1985), p.6.
9. For the purposes of our research we have adopted the following definition of genocide:

GENOCIDE is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator.

A full explanation of the terms of this definition will be found in Part I of Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies (New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming in 1990). For arguments on the inclusion of social and political groups under the definition of genocide, see also Frank Chalk, "Definitions of Genocide and Their Implications for Prediction and Prevention," Holocaust and Genocide Studies,

- 4 (1989), no.2:149-160.
10. It would also have been possible to develop the argument that most of the genocides which occurred after 1945 arose from perpetrators trying to fulfill an ideology. This is a hypothesis which we hope to examine in detail in a future paper.
  11. In addition to genocidal campaigns against the separation of Eritrea and Tigr , Ethiopia's government has also mounted genocides against specifically targeted social and political groups in central and southern Ethiopia in fulfillment of its ideology.
  12. For important discussions of these patterns, see Aristide Zolberg, Astrid Suhrke and Sergio Aguayo, Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) and Donald Horowitz, Ethnic Groups in Conflict (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), especially chapters 5 and 6.
  13. Roger Morris, Uncertain Greatness: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p.215.
  14. These events are recounted in many articles and books. Among the best sources are Jason W. Clay and Bonnie K. Holcomb, Politics and the Ethiopian Famine: 1984-1985, Second ed., Cultural Survival Report 20 (Cambridge, Mass.: Cultural Survival, 1986) and Robert D. Kaplan, Surrender or Starve: The Wars Behind the Famine (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988).
  15. International Herald Tribune, November 20, 1989, p.7.
  16. Cultural Survival Quarterly 12 (1988), no.2, p.48.
  17. Robert D. Kaplan, "The African Killing Fields," The Washington Monthly, 28, no. 8 (September 1988): 35.
  18. J. Clay and B. Holcomb, Politics and the Ethiopian Famine, p.53; The Economist, December 3, 1988, p.50; March 4, 1989, p.35; June 10, 1989, p.37.
  19. Roger Morris, Uncertain Greatness, p.224.
  20. Henry Kissinger, White House Years (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), p.914.
  21. Ibid., pp.897-898.
  22. Ibid., p.915.
  23. Ibid., pp.886, 914.

24. Ibid., pp.914-915.
25. Nixon and Kissinger did not recognize that India might have shot itself in the foot by creating an impoverished and hard to govern Bengali state on its border and that the new state might prove to be more of an asset to China than to India or the Soviet Union (This observation follows the argument suggested by Roger Morris, Uncertain Greatness, p.227). One of the important lessons of this case is that even advocates of a foreign policy based on raisons d'etat with the credentials of Nixon and Kissinger may sometimes get it all wrong, especially when an "idealistic" action--such as an intervention to defend human rights--is actually in accord with their geopolitical interest.
26. N.Y. Times, October 24, 1976, p.8.
27. N.Y. Times, February 16, 1978, p.5.
28. N.Y. Times, September 22, 1979, p.A4.
29. N.Y. Times, January 25, 1978, p. A5.
30. Ren Lemarchand, "Ethnic Genocide," Society, 12 (1975), no. 2: 57.
31. Ren Lemarchand, "Burundi: Ethnicity and the Ethics of Responsibility," a paper presented at "Genocide Watch," a conference sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Genocide, John Jay College for Criminal Justice, New York, N.Y., May 22-23, 1989.
32. N.Y. Times, January 27, 1976, p.3.
33. N.Y. Times, October 24, 1976, p.8.
34. Gazette (Montreal), August 22, 1988, p.B1; August 23, 1988, p.A10; Africa Confidential, 30, no.8 (April 14, 1989), p.5.
35. N.Y. Times, February 16, 1978, p.5.
36. N.Y. Times, October 24, 1976, p.8.
37. International Commission of Jurists, The Trial of Macias in Equatorial Guinea, Report by Alejandro Artucio. (Geneva: ICJ, 1979), p.16.
38. See Frank Chalk, "Africa, Human Rights, and the Press: What Can We Learn from the Cases of Burundi, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, and Liberia," a paper presented at "Genocide Watch," a conference sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Genocide, John Jay College for Criminal Justice, New York,

- N.Y., May 22-23, 1989.
39. N.Y. Times, September 25, 1977, p.14.
  40. Lemarchand, "Ethnic Genocide," p. 55.
  41. Ibid., p.59.
  42. Ibid.
  43. Ibid., pp.59-60.
  44. See Benedict R. Anderson and Ruth T. McVey, A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, 1971) and Harold Crouch, The Army and Politics in Indonesia (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978).
  45. On Cambodia, see Fran ois Ponchaud, Cambodia Year Zero (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) and Elizabeth Becker, When the War Was Over: The Voices of Cambodia's Revolution and Its People (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986).
  46. D. S. Greenway, "Report from Cambodia: The Tiger and the Crocodile," The New Yorker, July 17, 1989, pp. 74,78.
  47. The Economist, December 3, 1988, p.50.
  48. Michael Vickery, Cambodia: 1975-1982 (Boston: South End Press, 1984), pp.28, 35; United Nations Refugee Statistics.
  49. See, in particular, Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, "Distortions at Fourth Hand," The Nation, June 25, 1977, pp.789-794.
  50. See his discussion in The Quality of Mercy: Cambodia, Holocaust and Modern Conscience (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).
  51. Thierry Wolton, "Mengistu: la faim justifie les moyens," Le Point, No.649 (25 f vrier 1985), p.63; "Concert pol mique pour l'Ethiopie," Liberation, 30 October 1986, pp.23-26; R. Kaplan, Surrender or Starve, pp.105-112.
  52. R. Lemarchand, "Ethnic Genocide," p.60.

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